

WYCOMBE Wanderers, who arrived back from Italy on Monday evening, can give themselves a pat on the back this week. For the Blues appear to be the only club who came through the four Anglo-Italian Inter-League Semi-Professional Tournament matches without a caution or dismissal (writes STUART EARP).

Final figures on the disciplinary situation have not yet been finalised but it could well be that Wanderers were the only club not to lose a point. That means they will receive their full £500 from Rothmans (who awarded the sum to every competing club as a sportsmanship incentive). Clubs lost £100 per booking and £400 for a dismissal. Once again Wycombe set a model example with the conduct on the field.

But although Wycombe came through with a clean

sheet, there was a good deal of disciplinary trouble in the other matches. Worst event of the competition came at Pistoiese when they met Enfield. In the match at Enfield, one of the Italians had been sent off and from several different accounts, it appears that Pistoiese were carrying out something of a vendetta. Two Enfield players required stitches after nasty injuries and in the end, manager Fred Callaghan took his men off the field after 72 minutes with the score at 1-0 to Pistoiese.

Rothmans Isthmian League chairman Barry East was at the match. "I must be fair to Enfield, they tried to keep calm but they were definitely provoked and there was some very heavy tackling going on out there," he told me this week.

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Four Italians were booked in this game and one sent off. Enfield were asked to go back onto the field by Mr.

East, but they refused.

More trouble came in the final between Monza and Wimbledon on Saturday. This time it was the English club who started the trouble and both Roger Connell and Dave Bassett were booked. Connell was sent off after repeatedly arguing with the referee and the Don's eventually went down 1-0.

Wycombe, who were in Italy for 10 days, came through their matches well. The standard of refereeing at Pistoiese, when they lost 1-0, was poor but they had no complaints about the officials at Teramo where they were outplayed to the tune of 3-0.

Elsewhere in the competition, the standard of the Italian officials was reported to be fair and Barry East was quick to point out that every step had been taken to ensure a high standard of refereeing. "Most of the clubs were quite happy with the officials and there was only trouble in four or five of the 25 matches," he said.

Mr. East revealed that the competition organisers had gone to great expense to fly over F.I.F.A. officials from Sweden to handle the final in Monza — £500 in fact.

Several members of the Wycombe party told me on tour that they had several points to raise for next year's competition. The combination of a social tour and competitive matches was obviously detrimental on the field while too much travelling was involved and organisation for the final was poor. Wanderers were not invited to the final until noon on the Saturday and no tickets were sent to them. Had they wanted to go under their own steam, it would have cost almost £100 for four people to travel by car.

Mr. East, however, is optimistic for next year. "Obviously there were teething troubles but overall this competition was a success and did much to bury the 'cloth cap' image of English football. A total of £80,000 was spent on the competition and there's lots of things that can be improved for future years. We will be studying reports from each club."

Although Wycombe's performances against Pistoiese and Teramo were disappointing, the tourists had a thoroughly enjoyable 10 days in Italy. After one night in Monte Cattini, we moved down to the coastal resort of Riccione where much of the time was spent soaking up the sun on the beach.

Wanderers certainly had no complaints about the Italians' hospitality. They were entertained with a banquet before the Pistoiese game at one of Italy's most famous hotels and the home club laid on a magnificent feast after the match. Similarly Teramo also entertained the Wycombe officials with an informal lunch and presented each member of the party with inscribed vases. Wanderers received gifts from each club which reciprocated for the chairs Wycombe presented to both clubs at Loakes Park.

The players now have just one month's rest from football before they start training under new manager Ted Powell on July 20. The manager has still to finalise his playing squad for the season but expects to announce his squad in the near future.

He has arranged two home friendlies for the new season, against Wimbledon on August 10 and Redditch on August 14. The league programme kicks off on August 21.